

# MEMMOIRS

## OF

# LITERATURE.

MONDAY, *March* 17. 1712.

AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT of the Life and Trial of  
MICHAEL SERVETUS. In several Letters to \*\*\*\*.

Letter VII.

S I R,

**T**HE Unfortunate *Servetus* being sentenced to be burnt alive on the 27th of *October*, desired (a) to see *Calvin* two Hours before his Execution. That Reformer went to him, accompanied by two Magistrates. *Servetus* begged his Pardon. *Calvin* replied, he never thought of revenging himself for the hard Words which *Servetus* had given him. He added, that he had endeavour'd for the Space of Sixteen Years to reclaim him from his Errors; that he had writ to him with great Mildness, and continued to use him like a Friend, till he saw that *Servetus* inveighed against him, because he had freely reprov'd him. He exhorted the Prisoner to pray God that he would forgive him, for having attempted to pluck out three *Hypostases* out of his Essence, &c. When *Calvin* perceived that his Exhortations made no Impression upon the Prisoner, he did not presume to be wiser than his Master, and according to St. Paul's Command, went away from that Heretick, who was condemned by his own Conscience.

*Calvin* tells (b) us, that when *Servetus* heard he was condemned to Death,

(a) *Expositio errorum Michaelis Serveti, &c. among Calvin's Theological Tracts.* Genev. 1576. Pag. 817.

(b) *Ub. sup.* Pag. 836, 837.

sometimes he appeared Speechless and without any Motion, sometimes he fetched deep Sighs, and sometimes he made great Lamentations like a Madman, and that he cried out, *Mercy, Mercy, after the Spanish way.* I have by me some *French* Verses, written by a Person, who saw *Servetus* in his Confinement, and was present at his Execution. If we may believe that Author, *Servetus* expressed a wonderful Constancy, and died with a perfect Resignation to the Will of God. I hope, Sir, those Verses will not be unacceptable to you: they have never been printed.

**M**OY, qui dans la Cité des gehennes,  
 Visitay Servet en prison,  
 Et qui vids le brulant tison  
 Achever ses dernieres peines:  
 Je t'adjure par le discours,  
 Dont il voulut finir ses jours,  
 De le voir peint dans cet ouvrage,  
 Ou j'ay faict aussy peu d'effort,  
 Qu'en fist ce genereux courage,  
 Dans les atteintes de la mort.

Quelques Seigneurs picquez d'envie,  
 De le veoir si bien raisonner,  
 Apprez l'avoir faict condamner,  
 Allongerent un peu sa vie,  
 Afin que la mort eust loisir,  
 Auparavant que le saisir,  
 De se peindre plus effroyable,  
 Et sans cesse luy discourir  
 De son Arrest impitoyable,  
 Pour le faire long temps mourir.

Et cependant tres ardamment  
 Servet sans nul estonnement  
 Attendant à sortir de l'onde,  
 Prioit le Createur du monde.  
 Dans ces importunes langueurs,  
 En cor parmy les rigueurs,  
 De la Justice inexorable,  
 Il m'estoit permis de le veoir,  
 Et d'un confort peu secourable;  
 Luy rendre mon dernier debyoir.



Quelques uns que les moeurs & l'aage  
Attachoiẽt à son amitié,  
Par un meſme effort de pitié  
Luy rendoiẽt meſme teſmoignage :  
Tous à l'object de ſon ennuy,  
Eſtoient moins reſolus que luy ;  
Et conſolez par ſa parole,  
Le voyant ſec parmy nos pleurs,  
Comme moy venoient à l'eſchole,  
De bien vivre dans les malheurs.

Tous les jours dans cẽt exercice  
Il nous enſeignoit de mourir,  
Sans perdre temps à diſcourir  
Des cruaultez de la Juſtice.

A la fin quand le juſte cours  
De ſes incomparables jours  
Fut achevé. &c. &c.

Le jour venu que la nature avare  
Redemandoit une choſe ſi rare,  
Sans eſpargner non plus ceſte belle ame,  
Que le plus ſot du populaire infame;  
Nous revenons pour la derniere fois  
A l'entretien d'une ſi docte voix.

Ce coeur divin ſe tint tousjours plus ferme,  
Lors qu'il ſe veĩd plus proche de ſon terme,  
Sans que l'horreur de ſon trespas certain  
Y fiſt paroĩſtre un mouvement humain ;  
L'eſprit plus fort, voyant ſa derniere heure,  
Et qu'on le preſſe a changer de demeure.

Il falloĩt bien qu'une divine eſſence  
Au grand Server euſt donné la naiſſance :  
Un ſens humain n'eſt jamais aſſez fort,  
Pour ſe reſoudre a ſouſtenir la mort.  
Luy dans l'object de ſa fin route proche,  
D'un front de marbre, & d'une ame de roche,  
Monſtroĩt de l'oeil, du geſte, & du propos,  
Qu'il demeuroid dans un profond repos :

Et que pour veoir des pleurs a son martyre,  
 Il eust fallu quelque chose de pire :  
 Et ne souffrist jamais dans la prison,  
 Qu'un seul soupir fist honte a sa raison.

Puis il s'assit, & tout se reposant,  
 D'un esprit grave, & d'un discours puissant,  
 Avant se taire il nous fist prendre envie,  
 De l'aller suyvre au sortir de la vie.

Voyez, dict-il, comme au plus grand mal-heur,  
 La volupté suit de prez la douleur:  
 J'ay ce soulas, a cause de la chaisne,  
 Et ce plaisir a cause de ma peine.

Je beni le Juge & la Loy :  
 Ceste rigueur ne m'est point dure ;  
 Et quiconque aura l'ame pure,  
 Aymera la mort comme moy.

Car je scay qu'esloignant la masse de la terre,  
 Ou tant d'adversitez m'ont tousjours fait la guerre,  
 Je seray comme un Dieu :  
 Et que dans l'autre monde  
 Je doibs trouver un lieu,  
 Ou pour les gens de bien tant de douceurs abonde.

La les fatales ordonnances  
 Donnent les joyes & les tourments,  
 Les bons prennent les recompenses,  
 Et les mauvais les chastiments.

C'est pour quoy sans aucun remords,  
 Visitant le pais des morts,  
 Mon esprit joyeux imagine  
 Qu'il est icy comme estrange,  
 Et qu'il va d'un lieu passager,  
 Vers le lieu de son origine,  
 Ou' nul sans foy vraye & bonté,  
 Encore n'est jamais monté.

C'est ce grand palais de lumiere,  
 Ou nostre parfaicte raison,



Doibt habiter une maison,  
Plus heureuse que la premiere.

A des felicitez si rares,  
Se doit donner tout nostre soing;  
Car cette gloire de bien loing  
Passe la pompe des Tiars.

I have read in a printed Book, that when *Servetus* was carried to the Place of Execution, *Calvin* stood at a Window, and smiled when he saw him go by; but I am fully persuaded that it is a horrid Calumny. *William Farel* attended *Servetus* to his last Breath; and (a) that Divine had much a-do to make him say, that he desired the People should pray for him. Thus *Servetus* ended his Days without speaking, and shewing any Sign of Repentance (b). I shall say nothing of several Circumstances of his Execution, mentioned by *Sandius* (c) and others, because they appear to me fabulous or very uncertain.

*Champel* or *Champey*, a small rising Ground about a Musket Shot from *Geneva*, was then the common Place of Execution. I had the Curiosity to visit that Place, hardly known to any Traveller, and to see that very Spot of Ground, on which *Servetus* expired in the Flames. I shall occasionally observe that in the Year 1537. the Magistrates of *Geneva* ordered, that some large Stones, belonging to the Great Altar of the Cathedral Church, should be carried to *Champel* to make a Gibbet. Some of those Stones are still to be seen in that Place.

It will not be improper to observe, that three Protestants were burnt at *Lyons* by the Papists, about Six Weeks before the Execution of *Servetus*. *Beza* (d) informs us of this Particular. That Illustrious Divine tells us, that some other Persons of the Reformed Religion were also burnt in the same City, and in the same Year, before those Three above-mentioned. The following Words of the same Author are very remarkable. "The (e) Year 1553. (says he) is greatly memorable for the Triumph of a great Number of excellent Martyrs, particularly at *Lyons*".

The Execution of *Servetus* made a great Noise, not only among the Roman Catholicks, but also among all the moderate Protestants. The latter exclaimed against *Calvin* as being the Author of *Servetus's* Death;

(a) *Ibid.*

(b) See *Calvin*, *ibid.* and a Passage of *Beza* quoted by me, pag. 60. of this Volume.

(c) In his *Bibliotheca Antitrinitariorum*.

(d) History of the Reformed Churches of France, Vol. I. Book II. pag. 91, 92.

(e) *Ubi supra*, p. 88.



whereupon that Illustrious Reformer thought it necessary to vindicate himself, and to publish a Piece, wherein he undertook to prove that Hereticks ought to be put to Death. That Piece came out in the beginning of the Year 1554. with this Title: *Fidelis Expositio errorum Michaelis Serveti, & brevis eorundem Refutatio: ubi docetur jure Gladii coercendos esse Hæreticos* (a). It was signed by Calvin and Fourteen other Divines.

Calvin (b) complains that every body imputed to him what was done against Servetus by the Magistrates of Geneva. He acknowledges that he caused that Heretick to be apprehended and imprisoned; but he adds that when Servetus was found guilty, he never spoke a Word about the Punishment that should be inflicted upon him. I am willing to believe that Calvin never told the Judges in express Words, that Servetus should be put to death; but he plainly made it appear by his Conduct, that he thought Servetus deserved to lose his Life; nay, he wish'd for it, since he writ these Words to his Friend William Farel, *Spero capitale saltem fore judicium* (c).

It was objected (d) against Calvin, that Servetus had been apprehended at Vienne by his means, and that he had delivered him into the Hands of the Roman Catholicks, which was much the same as if he had exposed him to wild Beasts. Calvin made a very weak Defence upon that Head, being contented to say that Servetus had spread a Report four Years before, that he kept a private Correspondence with the Roman Catholicks; and that if he had accused that Heretick then, the Papists would not have been three Years without molesting him. This was no Answer to the Charge laid upon Calvin. The Question was, Whether, or no, that Reformer had lately informed the Roman Catholicks that Servetus was an Heretick. He should have answered that Question affirmatively or negatively. 'Tis certain that Servetus was imprisoned at Vienne by Virtue of Calvin's Information. The Prisoner charged him with it in a full Court; and it does not appear that Calvin did ever deny it. Besides, the Sentence pronounced against Servetus at Vienne mentions the Letters and Books written with Servetus's own Hand, and sent by him to Calvin, (*les Epitres & Ecritures de la main de Servet adressees à Calvin Prescheur de Geneve, & par ledit Servet reconnues.*)

(a) Calvin says in one of his Letters, that he writ that Piece in haste. It was immediately confuted in a Book entituled, *Contra Libellum Calvini, in quo ostendere conatur Hæreticos jure Gladii coercendos esse*. That Book was reprinted in Holland, in the Year 1612. I must observe, that Calvin inserted in his Apology the Letter of the Zurich-Divines, and left out those that were written by the other Ministers of Switzerland. Which puts me in mind of what he writ to Farel: *Tigurini omnium vehementissimi*. See pag. 74. col. 2. of this Volume. Calvin complains in that Work, that Servetus fill'd the Margins of all his Books with abusive Notes.

(b) *Ubi supra*, pag. 817, 818.

(c) See pag 63. of this Volume.

(d) *Ubi supra*, 816.



*Calvin* discovers a great Ingenuity in the following Words. "Nec vero (says (a) he) si vere id mihi objicerent, putarem esse negandi causam, qui non dissimulo, me authore factum esse, ut in hac urbe deprehensus ad causam dicendam postularetur. Obstrepant licet vel malevoli, vel maledici homines, ego libenter fateor, ac prae me fero (quia secundum Urbis leges aliter cum homine jure agi non poterat) ex me prodiisse Accusatorem: nec inficior meo consilio dictatam esse Formulam, qua patet fieret aliquis in causam ingressus".

*Calvin* says in the same Page: "Hoc tantum in praesentia testatum volo, me non ita capitaliter fuisse infestum, quin licitum fuerit, vel sola modestia, nisi mente privatus foret, vitam redimere. Sed nescio quid dicam, nisi fatali vasa fuisse correptum, ut se praecipitem jaceret — Itaque probabilis suspicio est alicunde vana fiducia inflatum fuisse, quae illum perdiderit". These last Words confirm what I have observed in my Vth Letter (b).

*Calvin* was still very angry with *Servetus*, several Years after his Execution; as it appears from the following Words in his Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles, Chap. XX. v. 28. However (says (c) he) we must not fancy that the two Natures are confounded, as Eutyches maintained, or as it has been falsely asserted in our Days by that nasty, proud, Spanish Dog *Servetus*, &c. The Epistle Dedicatory or Preface, prefixed to that Commentary, is dated August 1st. 1560.

I should have observed in my first Letter, that *Servetus* never went into Barbary to get a more compleat Knowledge of the Alcoran, tho *Spondanus* and some other Writers affirm it. What is said of *Servetus*'s Skill in the Arabick Language, is a mere Fiction grounded upon his pretended Journey into that Country.

To conclude, I must acquaint you, Sir, that the present Magistrates and Divines of Geneva express their Abhorrence for all manner of Persecution upon all Occasions. They believe that whoever preaches up Persecution, ought to be look'd upon as a Seditious Man, and a Disturber of the Society.

God Almighty will bless and prosper the Clergy of the Church of England for their Moderation; and I hope their Christian Temper will be a powerful Means to put an end to a groundless Separation from a Church, that is the Glory of the Reformation. I am, Sir, &c.

P. S. Far from being too prolix, I think I have been very short upon such a curious and important Subject.

(a) Ubi supra, pag. 827.

(b) Pag. 59, 60.

(c) Neanmoins, si ne faut-il pas que nous imaginions une confusion des deux Natures, comme Eutyches a voulu faire, ou telle que Servet ce vilain Chien orgueilleux Espagnol a voulu forger en ce temps-ci, &c.



## P A R I S.

**T**HE VIIth Letter of the IXth Volume \* of *Edifying and Curious Letters written from the foreign Missions by some Missionaries of the Society of Jesus*, runs upon a curious Subject. Father de Bourzes, Author of that Letter, gives an Account of his Observations concerning those Sparks, that come out of the Sea upon the run of a Ship. That sort of Light appears much better, when the Moon is under the Horizon, when the Stars are not to be seen, and when the Lanthorn is put out; and therefore it cannot be ascribed to the reflected Light of the Moon, and Stars, or to that of the Lanthorn of the Ship. That Light is sometimes faint and weak, and sometimes bright and so extensive, that Father de Bourzes, tho he stood nine or ten Foot above it, could easily read Capital Letters. Upon some Days one may easily discern the luminous Parts from others. It appears then that the luminous Parts have not all the same Figure. Some look like Points of Light: Others have the apparent Magnitude of Stars: Some have the Figure of Globules of one or two Lines in Diameter: Others are like Globes of the Bigness of a Man's Head: Those *Phosphori* do frequently form an oblong Square, three or four Inches long, and one or two broad.

The run of a Ship is not the only thing that produces such a Light: The Fish leave also behind them a Train of Light. Father de Bourzes saw sometimes many Fishes make a kind of Fire-work, as they were playing in the Water. A Rope, laid a cross, is sufficient to break the Water, and render it luminous. If the Water, taken from the

\* An Account of that curious Book may be seen in the I<sup>st</sup> Volume of these Memoirs, pag. 309.

Sea, be stirr'd in the dark, it shoots out many Sparks. When a Spark is formed, it keeps a long time, and if it sticks to something that is solid, it lasts several Hours. The more the Sea Water is viscous, the more proper it is to become luminous. This Observation is sufficient to find out the Cause of that surprizing Phenomenon. Father de Bourzes makes also some Observations upon the Sea-rain-bows, and those Exhalations that are easily inflamed.

## L O N D O N.

**T**HE following Books have been newly brought into England.

1. *Hugonis Grotii de Jure Belli ac Pacis Libri tres, in quibus Jus Natura & Gentium, item Juris Publici præcipua explicantur. Cum Annotatis Auctoris, ex postrema ejus antea obitum cura. Accesserunt ejusdem Dissertatio de Mari Libero, & Libellus singularis de Equitate, Indulgentia, & Facilitate, necnon Joann. Frid. Gronovii V. C. Notæ in totum opus de Jure Belli & Pacis. Editio novissima. Amstelædami, apud Janssonio-Waesbergios. 1712. in 8vo.*

We are told in an Advertisement, prefixed to this New Edition, that it is extremely correct.

2. *Johannis Conradi Barchusen Synopsis Pharmacæ methodum pleraque medicamenta, sive a Veteribus sive ab Recentioribus excogitata, componendi juxta & conficiendi tradens. Editio tertia. Accedunt duo Indices, quorum alter remedium dosin, alter medicamina cuius corporis affectui singulariter dicata, monstrat. Lugduni Batavorum. 1712. in 8vo. Pagg. 260.*

3. *Johannis Conradi Barchusen Compendium Ratiocinii Chemici more Geometrarum concinnatum. Lugduni Batavorum 1712. in 8vo Pagg. 70.*

Those three Books are to be had at Mr. Vaillant's in the Strand.

L O N D O N: Printed by J. Roberts: And Sold by A. Baldwin, near the Oxford-Arms in Warwick-Lane. (Price 2 d.)